

## Concluding Statement of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)

22 September 2017

1. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) held its fifty-first meeting in New York on 22 September 2017.
2. The meeting was chaired by Hon Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, and was attended by Hon Carl B. Greenidge, Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana; Hon Mobashar Jawed Akbar, Minister of State of External Affairs of India; Hon Amina Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Kenya; Hon Carmelo Abela, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta; Hon Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister of Namibia; Hon Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan; Hon George Milner Tozaka, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Solomon Islands; and HE Craig Hawke, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations.
3. Ministers received an update from the Secretary-General on her ongoing Good Offices engagements in support of member Governments' efforts to strengthen their democracy, human rights, rule of law, gender and youth. The Group was updated on recent deployment of Commonwealth Observer Groups to national elections held in The Bahamas, Lesotho, Papua New Guinea and Kenya, led by former Heads of Governments and other eminent citizens of the Commonwealth. The Group was also briefed on some of the Secretariat's follow-up work and technical support provided to Election Management Bodies and other key democratic institutions.
4. The Group commended and congratulated the Secretary-General's recent engagement with the political leadership in Zambia and noted the ongoing engagement by her Special Envoy to support Zambia's efforts to address the challenges to its democracy while pursuing its development objectives. The Group encouraged the Secretary-General to continue the constructive trajectory of her Good Offices efforts throughout the Commonwealth.
5. In line with its strengthened 2011 mandate, the Group continued to review developments in a number of Commonwealth member states. CMAG reiterated the importance of pursuing an integrated approach to address the challenges to democracy and other Commonwealth values with a relevant programme of technical support and capacity building. Ministers welcomed CMAG's new approach of working proactively and constructively with national governments to address their challenges and for CMAG not to be perceived simply as a punitive body that criticises the shortcomings of member states.

6. CMAG encouraged the Secretariat to continue providing support to member states to address global challenges through initiatives such as youth development, addressing climate change and countering violent extremism, which play a critical role in fostering strong and stable democracies. The Group commended the high quality of support given by the Secretariat to its missions, and invited the Secretary-General to communicate the Group's congratulations to the Secretariat. The Group reaffirmed the importance of shared prosperity through innovation and the need to pursue strong partnerships between Governments, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations.

#### Other Matters

7. CMAG noted the Secretary-General's assessment of expressions of interest from The Gambia and Togo to join the Commonwealth.
8. CMAG recognised that the tenure of some of the members of the Group will come to an end when the Group is reconstituted at the next CHOGM in April 2018. The Chair conveyed his appreciation to the Secretary-General for the support the Secretariat has provided to CMAG over the last two years since the Group was reconstituted in Malta in 2015.

#### Next Meeting

9. CMAG's next meeting will be held in London in the margins of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April 2018.